

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

River Mountain Mfg.

Oklahoma Alliance for Manufacturing Excellence

River Mountain is Out of The Woods

Client Profile:

River Mountain Manufacturing is a 20-year-old manufacturer of red cedar and pine log furniture. Hand-crafted pieces include bedroom furniture, chests, bunk beds, dining tables, swings, and rustic lawn furniture. Finished products are marketed through a showroom in Denver, Colorado. The company employs 25 people at its factory in Broken Bow, Oklahoma.

Situation:

River Mountain was doing well after graduating from a business-incubator program, but the owners knew they could do better. They called upon Kenneth Norris, a local manufacturing extension agent with the Oklahoma Alliance for Manufacturing Excellence (The Alliance), a NIST MEP network affiliate.

Solution:

Norris used a one-time wood-products waste-reduction grant to implement Lean Manufacturing principles. River Mountain sent employees through a Lean 101 introductory course hosted by the local technology center. It was followed by an on-site Value Stream Mapping effort. A one-week implementation project was completed with impressive results. A Lean team with members from management and shop-floor employees was established. The first area targeted was a bed product line. The goal was to reduce waste, assembly travel distance, and overall lead time. Just for that one implementation project, distance traveled per unit went down from 1,933 feet to 314 feet and lead time was reduced from eight-and-a-half days to two days. The improvements resulted in a greater production capacity. Less inventory is needed now and there is much better productivity per person. Norris also helped evaluate the purchase of new equipment used to increase production and control dimensional lumber. "They [River Mountain] were open to innovative ideas to help them improve production, and it made a huge difference to their bottom line," Norris said.

Results:

- * Increased sales by \$500,000.
- * Retained sales by \$400,000.
- * Created 6 new jobs.
- * Retained 5 jobs.
- * Reduced overhead costs by \$12,000.
- * Reduced turn-around time by 75 percent.
- * Reduced travel distance from 1,933 feet to 314 feet.
- * Reduced lead time from 8 1/2 days to 2 days.
- * Reduced inventory.
- * Increased productivity per person.

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Testimonial:

"The Alliance really helps rural manufacturers like us, who otherwise have few resources."

Rod Reeser, Owner